

Close the Vaccination Gap with Last Mile Support

Educate, automate, vaccinate

The news that the COVID-19 vaccines were ready to be distributed was a bright spot in 2020. But the vaccination campaign is off to a frustratingly slow start.

A glaring problem is that as the federal and state governments distribute the vaccine, pharmacies, hospitals, and local county health officials are left to handle the “last mile” of getting the vaccine to residents on their own.

Based on years of experience helping government organizations, healthcare organizations, and private companies solve the last mile problem by increasing efficiencies and better connecting with constituents/customers, at TTEC, we’ve identified key ways to remove last mile obstacles and get vaccines to individuals faster and more effectively with improved citizen experience. We think the three keys to success are educate, automate, vaccinate.

Challenge: The need to educate citizens on the vaccination

A major gap in the plan for the last mile is engaging with citizens to educate them on the vaccination process and efficacy. Let’s face it, there is a portion of the population that does not trust the vaccine or does not believe they need to be vaccinated for a host of reasons.

It is incumbent on the state and local governments and vaccine providers to educate the public on why we all need to have the vaccination. We need to educate them on where and when they are able to receive the vaccination. This vaccination effort is on a scale that we simply have not seen before in our lifetime.

Solution: A proactive and comprehensive communication strategy

There should be a strategy to educate the public on when, where, how, and why to get vaccinated. If we can have a national ad campaign for anti-smoking we should certainly be able to develop a vaccination awareness campaign at the national, state, and local level.

Challenge: Overstretched patient support

Public health experts have pointed out that many of the details of the final stage of the vaccine distribution process, such as scheduling appointments and answering patient questions, have been left to local health officials and hospitals that are already stretched beyond their limits.

Solution: Extend resources is with automation and artificial intelligence

For instance, when the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services was overwhelmed by callers seeking to file unemployment insurance claims, TTEC deployed cloud and automation technology to deflect calls from the agency’s at-capacity system and a team of 30 experienced at-home agents to answer calls and lighten the in-house DWS agent workload.

COVID-19 Facts and Figures

U.S.

Country with the most coronavirus cases: United States

6 million

About 6 million Americans received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by early January—far short of the 20 million goal by 2020

60%

of American adults describe the COVID-19 vaccine rollout as frustrating

24 days

Maximum incubation time of the novel coronavirus: 24 days

38%

of pharmaceutical executives say engaging and retaining patients is a key challenge in the pandemic

Sources: Data as of January 19, 2021 Worldometer, Johns Hopkins University, Statista, World Bank, Insee, Morning Consult, IQVIA

With TTEC Intelligent Voice Assistant (IVA), Cisco Webex Contact Center Enterprise, and Google Contact Center AI, we also augmented the State's Department of Workforce Services so callers no longer received busy signals when the on-premise interactive voice response (IVR) system reached capacity.

When callers dialed a toll-free number, the IVA immediately picked up and callers could ask questions such as, "how do I file an unemployment claim?" or "do I qualify for unemployment insurance?" The IVA provided an answer from the State's existing knowledgebase. If more information was needed, the IVA connected the caller with a TTEC associate who could answer most questions. For complex requests, the caller was transferred to an in-house DWS representative.

Hospitals, pharmacies, and local health departments could use the same approach to rapidly expand their capacity to service callers—and easily scale back when necessary. And by routing calls to the appropriate resource—AI or human agent—callers receive fast support, at any time

Challenge: Vaccine confusion and misinformation

With so many players involved in the allocation, distribution, injection, and reporting of the vaccine, it's easy for communication errors to occur. For instance, a pharmacy chain was unaware that a state agency had announced that citizens should call the pharmacy for details about the COVID-19 vaccine and were unprepared for the incredibly high call volume, leading to frustrated customers. Making the vaccination process as effortless as possible is critical to vaccine adoption and beating back the virus.

Solution: Rapid and consistent information

Digitally enable the human element. We can automate a lot of things but we can't recreate empathetic human-to-human contact. By digitally enabling our agents with information we allow them to focus on the citizens and lend an empathetic ear to their questions and concerns. Well-trained, experienced contact center agents equipped with effective technology solutions play an important role in communicating information and promoting confidence and uptake.

Challenge: Sudden information changes

New vaccination guidelines and rules are being updated constantly, adding to societal confusion and uncertainty. As the vaccination process unfolds, health departments and pharmacy services companies also need an easy way to stay in touch with customers, such as reminding them to get their second dose.

Solution: Nimble and convenient messaging

Instead of waiting for consumers to send their questions, pharmacies and local health organizations can proactively message customers. Messaging allows for asynchronous, always-on communication between a customer and agent on a messaging platform, primarily through the customer's mobile phone. Previous conversations are saved and resuming the conversation is as simple as texting a friend. With minimal IT resource support, messaging can be deployed, configured, and implemented in as little as one week.

The critical link: last mile support

While these solutions will go a long way in helping close the gap between vaccine distribution and adoption, more federal funding and logistical support at the local level are still badly needed.

The COVID-19 vaccines are a scientific and technological breakthrough. Meeting the final challenges requires flexibility, innovation and trust. Failure is not an option.

TTEC can help you avoid overwhelming your contact centers during vaccine rollout with rapidly trained associates enabled by our secure and tech-agnostic solutions.

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About us

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